SOCIAL STRUCTURE

I. The Nomads

A. The Nomadic Turks (Kazakh, Kirghiz and Uzbek)

The distinguishing feature of the social structure of the nomadic Turks of the Northwest is that social status is acquired by wealth (sheep, cows, camels and horses) or by descent. Descent among the nomadic Turks is always patrilineal, and a modified form of ultimogeniture is found. As the sons of each family marry, each one receives an equal share of the family's wealth. This includes a winter pasture. Only the youngest son inherits the father's property (tents, precious furniture, etc.).

The smallest social unit is the family; a number of related families constitute an aul which is at the same time the migration unit in regard to pastoral nomadism.

Unrestricted authority is held by the patriarch of the family. The patriarch of the most influential family (measured in terms of wealth and family connections) becomes the chieftain of an aul. A certain number of auls constitute the great aul. The latter possesses a common property brand which is called tamga (the tamga marks are to be found mostly on the left side of animals, on tents and on gravestones. The tamgas are believed to be of totemistic origin and therefore thought to be a very old institution. Their purpose, obviously, is to distinguish and identify herds and other property.

The great aul (which might also be called a sub-clan) is led by a chieftain whose title is bäk, beg, biy, bey, or pex, depending upon the Turkic dialect concerned. The chieftain of such a great aul functions as a leader and as a judge whose duty it is to mediate and to appease in disputes between single persons, families and auls. Several great auls constitute a clan, which is also led by one of the bäks of the great auls. Several clans together form a tribe which is led by a khan or sultan and finally two or three tribes constitute a horde which in turn form the nation; e.g., the Kazakh have four hordes, the Kirghiz two, etc. Sometimes it is difficult to decide what constitutes a great aul or sub-clan and what is actually a clan. An extended family may have the function of an aul; a great clan may have the function of a clan; while a declined clan may has the function of an aul.

A Kazakh Turk could define his position within his own people by stating that he belongs a)to the Turkic race b) to the Kazakh nation c) to the Middle horde d) to the Kipchak tribe e) to the Toru Aibgyr clan f) to the Shashli sub-clan (great aul) g) to the Boshai branch (aul) and h) to the Janay sub-branch (extended family). For the Kirghiz and Kazakhs, a clan can be defined as a social group which, by force of either real or putative consanguinity,

/The New Uighurs/

563 The Sinkiang nomad must buy his bride
[184] with a bride-price, but the sedentary Sinkiang bride is given
[583] away by her father. In addition he even pays all wedding ex-
penses. Marriages are arranged by a "go-between", who usu-
[584] ally occupies a higher social position than either the bride or
[586] groom's families. As in all Moslem communities, divorce is
a relative simple matter for the male. Therefore, a consid-
[589] erable number of women without family attachments are present
in all Uighur communities. These unattached women are usu-
ally engaged in employment as tailors, cooks, or weavers, and
thereby form a distinct social unit. As a rule they are identi-
fied with the household of their employer.

563 In general, all Uighurs are individualistic in character.
621 However, the structure of the community with its irrigational
182 problems gives them a collectivist outlook on life in parts.
[181] The families that form such an Uighur community are by no
means bound together by kinship obligations. Their communal
cooperation rests exclusively on the fact that without collective
effort and labor the community would perish.

563 Prior to 1949, no organized youth groups existed in Uighur
[561] communities, since in any Islamic community the male child
begins to participate in the activities centered around the
mosque at a very early age. All other youth groups were dis-
[585] couraged. The young Uighur man becomes a full member of
[885] the community at the time of his marriage. He will receive
title to any land or water rights only upon the decease of the
eldest male member of his family. Until then both he and his
wife work as members of the extended family group. A young
merchant usually will act as his father's representative until
the father's retirement from business affairs or his death.

563 Merchants are bound together in "guilds". However, these
441 associations are not official institutions but were natural out-
growths of the merchants' self-protecting interests. Should
any member of the community be guilty of not paying his debts,
he will be prosecuted by the members of such a "guild", even
though he may have moved to another community. In each
locality or city, the merchant's "guild" is organized under the
leadership of an aqsaqal, who functions as a public official.

563 Individuals of the Uighur community who do not inherit any
166 land, move to non-irrigated areas which nevertheless show
241 possibilities of being irrigable. These new irrigation pro-
425 jects are usually undertaken as the collective effort of several
families who move as a group to such a new area. This prac-
tice may explain population increases in Uighur occupied
areas.

563 New industries and the further development of natural
178 resources may have some influence upon Uighur social struc-
ture, since these factors increase the wealth of both the

/Sedentary Moslems of Sinkiang/

593 permission of her husband. This is unheard of among orthodox
562 Moslems. These few incidents are indicative of the general
563 attitude in Sinkiang to women and the place they occupy in society and in their families.

563 The father-son relationship is very important, particularly
593 when the son has not yet established a home for himself and is living at his father's house. The father initiates his son in a trade
[868] and provides a wife for him. In most cases the father provides
[584] his son with a strip of land or some property after he is married
[425] to start him in life. After his father's death, the son inherits his
[428] property, and his prestige and social status (if he has any). How-
[101] ever, the relationships of father-son is not as seriously regarded as it is in China, where it carries such an immense value. The son does not always stay with his father. In some cases of divorce,
[586] it may be agreed that the mother will take care of the son, in which even the son is subject to his mother's influence. Otherwise, the mother-son relationship is not as important as that of the father-son. The mother's influence on her son's life is not as significant as it is on the daughter.

The father-daughter relationship is much looser. The father has much less contact with his daughter than with his son. He is mainly interested in marrying her off and making some profit out of the marriage deal. If he is an orthodox Moslem he may hardly
[582] see her at all, the custom being that men eat separately. The daughter leaves home at a very early age (twelve to fourteen)to get married, and if she is not divorced, her father is likely to see her very few times after she has left home.

The mother-daughter relationship is closer and warmer. Both stay home, and the mother's duty is to teach her daughter household duties and social manners. Mother and daughter are likely to maintain a fairly close relationship even after the daughter's
[586] marriage. In general, in cases of divorce, the father will keep the sons and the mother will keep the daughters, and the small children who are nursing. Exceptions do occur where the mother keeps all the children, or the father agrees to take care of a daughter. The arrangements depend on the agreement reached between the parents, and on their economic conditions.

Primarily as a result of the unstable family conditions, the relationship between brothers is the loosest of the family ties. In many cases brothers may not be full brothers, but may have a different mother or a different father. In the lower classes, brothers often go to seek fortune in a different town or a different section of town, and lose complete contact with each other. Fortune, wealth, and social status may also put gaps between brothers. They generally do not know each other very well and lose complete contact after their own marriages. Brother-sister relationships hardly ever attain a close association. The girls leave home at an